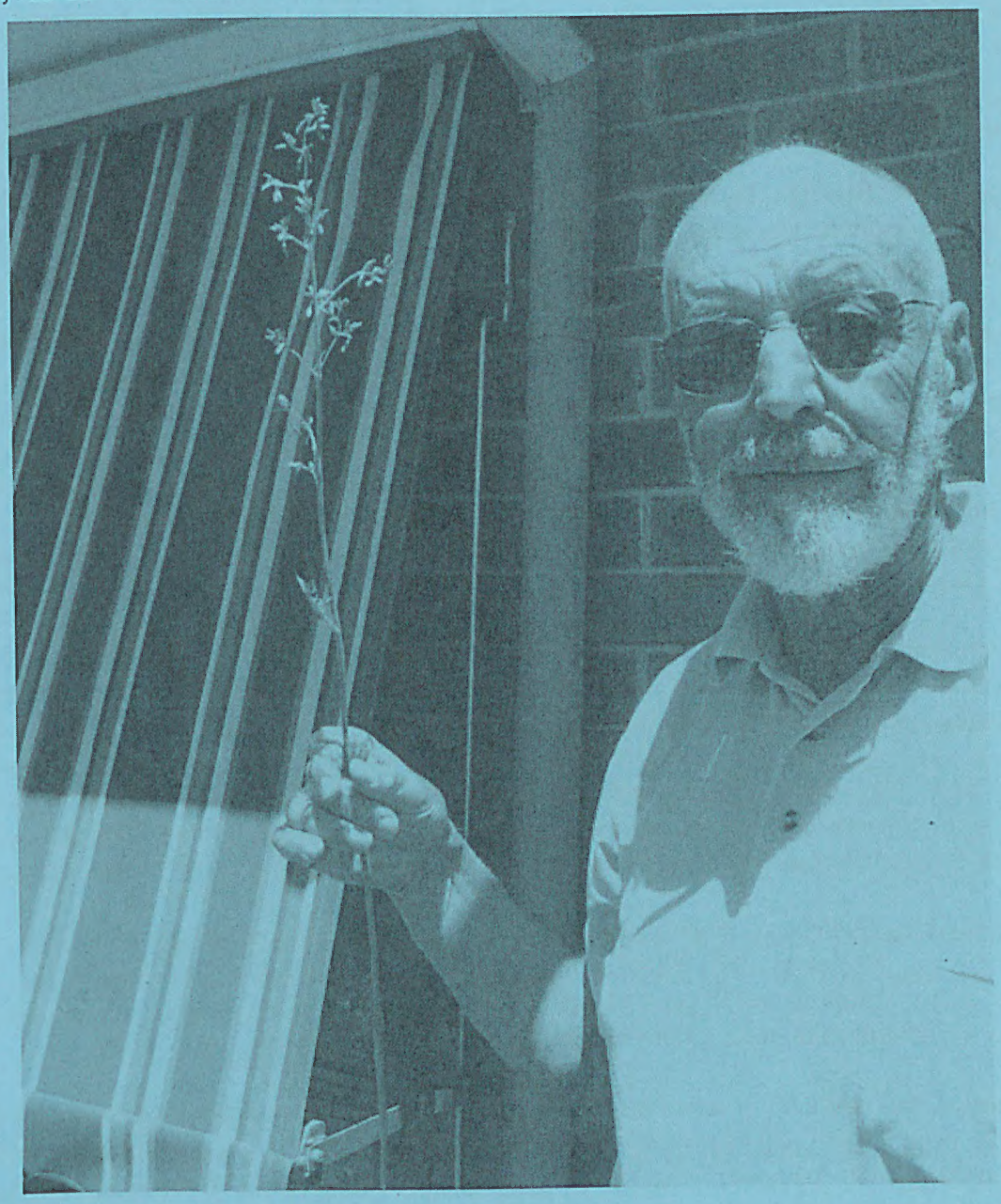
WHIRRAKEE

December 2012 Vol. 33 No. 11

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552. Web address: www.BendigoFNC.com.au
ISSN 0812-423X e-mail address: info@bendigofnc.com.au

Office Bearers for 2012 - 2013

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
Vice President	Richard Goonan	
Secretary/Public Officer	Stuart Fraser	5443 1326
Minute Secretary	*position vacant*	
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	John Lindner/Joy Clusker	5448 3406 (after 15/12)
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	*to be confirmed*	
Garden Convenor/Secretary	*position vacant*	
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)	0407 427179
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Co-editor	Gemma Candy	
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Vanessa Richardson	
Website coordinator/Webmaster	Ben Goonan	

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Regular fauna excursions take place most Fridays. See page 11 for details.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 33, No. 11, December 2012
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

Item	Contributor	Page
Short notices		3
Still the expert…	Joy Clusker	3
Dianella tarda in a wet place	Tom Burton	3
Colour Photo section	various wonderful photographers	4-7
November excursion report	John Lindner	8
Excursion planning for 2013	John Lindner	9
November general meeting – speaker Ken Walker 'Native Australian Bees'	Sabine Wilkens	10

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
Excursions used to be a very big part of the Club's activities, and many good memories of our members come from such days out. I am therefore very pleased that we have two new excursion officers who will renew this aspect of our field-natting. The trigger was perhaps the excursion that had to be planned for the SEANA meeting, and the enjoyment they provided. Joy Clusker and John Lindner have decided to take on the organising of some very special excursions in 2013, some detail is on page 9.
I hope everybody will have some quietl time over the Christmas break, but also some excitement when observing nature in your backyard, campground or wherever you are…and don't forget the Christmas dinner on the 12th of this month (incl. the earlier starting time and the amazing speaker).

Front page photographer: Tom Burton
Dianella tarda is a relatively uncommon lily, found here and there in the Mandurang Valley. When we lived in Mandurang, we were fortunate to have two clumps of this plant living on our property.
……continued on page 3

Short Notices

The Victorian Nature Photography Group Inc invites members of the BFNC to join with them for their **Spring Flowers camp at Falls Creek** Jan 5th--12th 2013.
Venue....Australian Alpine Club which is designed for self catering.
Fees.....Non Members $240.
Child under 17 years $120.
Under 3 years free.
Interested members should contact the Secretary Adrienne Meyer, 5 Carpenters Lane Nth', Hastings 3915. Ph.5979 1994.
email....adrienne27@yahoo.com.au

Still the expert...

By Joy Clusker

I am interested in fungi and photographing them, and had been told of Reg Smart, one of the original field naturalists, who had hundreds of photos and a great knowledge of fungi . I thought it was too late to meet him, two years ago when at 98, he went into residential care, but a chance encounter at the Newbridge store one afternoon changed that . Allan Spence and I spent 20 minutes or so chatting and listening to his stories, at 100 years, he is incredibly sharp with great stories and enthusiasm for the natural world. He invited me to see some of his photos, which I did, 4 albums of great photos of fungi, slime moulds, orchids and wild flowers, all using a pre–digital Pentax camera and a tripod fashioned out of bicycle parts. One fantastic photo was taken of Ghost fungi, *Omphalotus nidiformis,* which glows in the dark, captured by an 8 hour exposure. He talked about finding, with Jack Kallem, Bullarto, a top spot for an incredible variety of fungi, taking his children and grandchildren there. Reg was also proud of the work he did with Professor Bob Seviour, at the then Bendigo Institute of Technology on the electron microscope, on *Peziza repanda*, a fungus Reg had found growing on his nature strip. They jointly published a paper in England as a result, and the design of that very clever tripod was published as well. This was after Reg had retired from work, managing the timber yard at Isers home hardware for 20 years. Reg also built furniture and painted, landscape and fungi. I have included a copy of his photo of a double Bendigo wax flower taken on private land at Sedgwick (see next page). His photos form a great collection of records of some now rare plants and fungi and observations by someone self – taught and with an enthusiasm for the natural world that is still evident, I am very glad I got to meet him.

***Dianella tarda* in a wet place**
by Tom Burton ...continued from front cover and page 2

...*D.tarda* gets its specific name (*tarda* = late) from the fact that its flowers open late in the afternoon. Its petals are mauve and recurved, i.e., curved backwards, and its anthers are yellow. In Mandurang, the flower stalks are quite tall, over half a metre.

Because *D.tarda* is somewhat rare, we invited Marilyn Sprague to collect seed from our plants for conservation purposes, which she did, and before we left the Bendigo district to live in Melbourne, the Sheepwash Creek Landcare Group presented to my wife, Cherie, three of the plants that Marilyn had grown from the seed of those plants. The three plants currently thrive in our very crowded front garden, but in the richer soil and high rainfall of our far-eastern suburb of Melbourne (average over 860mm), the flower stalks grow very tall.

As you can see from the photo, comparing the height of the stalk with that of the adjacent senior citizen, they approach 2m in height. Eventually, the stalks collapse under their own weight, and lie on top of the surrounding vegetation, where they produce masses of lovely, delicate flowers. We have a lot of keen gardeners here, and as they pass our garden, *Dianella tarda* stops them in their tracks.

An amazing Field Naturalist

Double wax flower (*Philotheca verrucosa*), photographed by Reg Smart.

Reg Smart is still enthusiastic about fungi and photography, see page 3.

In November, Family Nature Club participants went to Crusoe Reservoir for a walking and story telling session and spotted this interesting slime mould (photos by Joy Clusker)

November 17 excursion to Ruedin's eucalyptus distillery and Kamarooka surroundings

Top Photo:
Participants in leisure mode (Photo: J. Clusker)

Middle photos: (J. Clusker)
(l) The old chimney from the distillery
(r) Quandong *Santalum acuminatum* (Kamarooka)

Bottom left: (John Lindner)
The group against the old chimney, which seems to be a nice place to sit on

At the big Mallee fowl mound
Joy Clusker (partly obscured), Rob Watkins and Noel Ruedin

The concrete house that Leon built at the distillery.

Below left: A while ago we had a photo by Jenny Shield of an unidentified fungus…
Joy Clusker was able to give it a name: *Pycnoporus coccineus*. It grows on dead wood, gradually breaking it down. You can find it most times of the year

Below right: This time last year, parts of the forest west of Inglewood were badly affected with blistered leaves, as shown by Rod Orr here (see also December 2011 *Whirrakee)*. The culprit was never identified, but it would be interesting to know how the trees look this year. Does anybody know?

What the…? (Photo by Joy Clusker)

Get your magnifying glass out to see this bug, possibly related to the Cotton Harlequin Bug (*Tectocoris diophthalmus*), actually laying an egg on some brickwork (photographed by Sue Fraser

on their verandah). Sue is not sure, as its eggs are laid on branches and are dark in colour and not at all like the pearly ones in the photo. Perhaps someone can tell her what it is and a little about it. Sadly the eggs have now disappeared!

Excursion Report (November 17, 2012)

by John Lindner

Location: Kamarooka Forest section of the Greater Bendigo National Park

Map: Huntly 7724-N, 1:50,000, north-east corner of the map. This map, along with the adjoining one to the south, Bendigo 7724-S, is the best value for a mere $10 from Department of Sustainability and Environment, Epsom (Ag Dept in "old speak") that is possible.

Participants John and Kate Lindner, Rod and Jan Orr, Vanessa Richardson, Janet Justin, Matt Comer, Rob and Cynthia Watkins, Joy Clusker, Bev Culvenor, Neil Watkins, Anne Bridley, Ralph Moran, Nancy Toohey, Kerrie Norris

Guest leader Noel Ruedin

Plant list help Rod Orr

List of activities at the distillery

1. Walk into the eucalyptus distillery from Tennyson Road

On the 1.5 kilometre walk, we were shown the demarcation between the virgin, uncut mallee to the west and the cut mallee to the east. The latter was last cut in about 1977. We also crossed a watercourse with many large Yellow Gums, which flows north and then east to join Round Creek, the only watercourse in the Whipstick with more or less permanent pools of water and River Red Gums. Further along the track we passed into the former harvesting area where Green and Blue Mallee were cut about every two years.

2. Small mallee fowl mound

I had asked Noel if he would be able to show us an example of a typical nesting mound as a contrast to the big mound. This one was located about 100 metres south of the access track, in dense mallee scrub. It was about 6 metres in diameter, with the central depression (where the egg chamber would have been) about 2.5 metres in diameter. There was a good variety of trees and shrubs in the vicinity – Blue, Green and Bull Mallees; Golden and Gold-dust Wattles; Cross-leaf and Scarlet Honey-myrtle; Small Crowea; Dampiera.

3. Big mallee fowl mound

All the details about this wonderful structure are in the August edition of *Whirrakee*. It is noteworthy that the mound definitely faces north on a slight slope, because as Noel pointed out, the birds depend on the heat of the sun to warm the inside of the mound once the internally generated heat from decomposing vegetation has been exhausted.

4. Working the eucalyptus distillery

Noel took us through the whole process of extracting oil from eucalyptus leaves: hand harvesting and stockpiling; placing the leaves in the brick vat on an arrangement of hooks and chains to enable pulling them out; placing the lid with the crane and mudding over the gap;

steaming the vat; condensing the mixture of water and eucalyptus oil vapour; collecting the condensate; separating the oil from the water; not contaminating the dam water with the waste water; collecting the black water from the bottom of the vat for sale as a rust inhibitor.

5. Attempt to find the last working mound in the locality

Noel tried to locate this mound, which had been active within living memory, but even with his trusty GPS, we were unsuccessful in the very dense Broombush (*Melaleuca uncinata*) stand which restricted visibility to a few metres.

Driving tour in the afternoon

Stop 1: Junction of Camp Road and Tennyson Road

This was a treasure trove of rare and unusual plants.

Clematis microphylla,
Old Man's Beard (Fruiting)

Dodonaea viscosa ssp. *cuneata*,
Wedge-leaf Hop-bush (Fruiting)

Myoporum deserti, Turkey-bush (Fruiting)
Myoporum montanum,
Water-bush/Native Myrtle(Flowering)
Pomaderris paniculosa,
Inland Pomaderris (Fruiting)
Acacia brachybotrya, Grey Mulga
(Minute pods after recent flowering)
Cassinia uncata, Sticky Cassinia (Flowering)
Olearia decurrens, Daisy-bush
Daviesia benthamii, Spiny Bitter-pea

Stop 2: Near junction of Camp Road and Clay Road
Santalum acuminatum Quandong (Fruiting)
Several bright red fruits (see photo on pg 5). Rod said he had never seen these trees with fruit before – perhaps they are at the southern extreme of their range and require just the right combination of rain and temperature to produce fruit here.

Stop 3: Kamarooka Mallee area on Clay Rd
Eucalyptus behriana, Bull Mallee
Eucalyptus froggattii, Kamarooka Mallee
Olearia decurrens, Daisy-bush
Prostanthera aspalathoides, Scarlet Mintbush

Stop 4 *Boobialla Track off Clay Road*
Afternoon tea with all the trimmings. If you missed it, we feel sorry for you.
One of the last remaining steel tanks or containers in which charcoal was made during the Second World War, when petrol was rationed. Noel provided a full rundown on how the charcoal was made from Kamarooka Mallee and how it was used in a car's gas producer.
Eucalyptus froggattii, Kamarooka Mallee
(some with flowers)
Eucalyptus microcarpa, Grey Box
Wolffia australiana, Tiny Duckweed
The smallest flowering plant, floating on the surface of a dam, which Rod said, indicated that the water was of good quality.
Ptilotus spathulatus (Flowering)
Cassinia uncata, Sticky Cassinia
(Flowering)
Dodonaea viscosa ssp *cuneata*, Wedge-leaf
Hop-bush (Fruiting)
White-browed Woodswallows

Editor's note: In the next edition of *Whirrakee*, we will run an article about the history of Ruedin's eucalyptus distillery by Noel Ruedin, with an introduction and conclusion by John Lindner.

Excursions in 2013 (and beyond?)
by John Lindner

Since so much hard work was put into planning, trialling and running a number of interesting field trips for the SEANA (South-east Australian Naturalists Association) conference in August, it has been decided that, yes, after all, field trips are really an essential part of the club's existence. We need them at regular intervals. However we have decided that one every month is pretty taxing, but that one every 2 months (6 per year) would serve very well.

We have already run the first of these to the north-east part of the Whipstick on 17 November. It was well attended and was a great success. See separate report on page 8.

Joy has undertaken to run a fungi excursion to Bullarto Reservoir or somewhere similar down south, in either May or June, according to how the season turns out for fungi and which location comes up trumps with the goods.

I intend to run a boating trip across Lake Eppalock and up the Campaspe River in March most probably. We used to do this trip back in the nineties and before, when the lake level was always high. Then we used canoes but I do not think this is practical now. I have checked the route and attractions out thoroughly on two occasions since the lake refilled so spectacularly after the drought, and I can assure you that the historical ruins, geological structures, plants and birds are second to none. It really is quite a wonderful location, a bit of a lost world actually.

The other excursions can come from our core of tested and documented excursions that we ran for SEANA:

Location	Topic
Leader	
Full day excursions	
Heathcote	Geology
Eric Wilkinson	
Whipstick/Kamarooka	Flora, fauna
Matt Comer	
Mt Alexander & south	Flora, fauna, geology
Ern Perkins (Castlemaine FNC)	
Northern plains	Wetlands
Ben Goonan	
Wellsford Forest	Flora, fauna
Rod and Jan Orr	
Half day excursions	
Wildflower Drive	Wildflowers
Matt Comer	
Spring Gully	Graptolites
Phil Dyson	
Waste water treatment plant	Waterbirds
Jane Cleary	
Southern Whipstick	Wildflowers
Jane Cleary	
The Springs, Sedgwick	Flora, geology
Rob Moors	structures
Rosalind Park/No. 7 Reservoir	
Kerrie Norris	Flying foxes/ arboreal mammals

This material will keep us going for 2 years at least, and no doubt we will come up with more ideas. The Bendigo area does have endless possibilities.

Native vegetation laws under attack...

The State Government is planning to make some alarming changes to Victoria's native vegetation clearing laws.
If they go through, your local habitat will need your help more than ever!
Now is the time to make your voice heard! Come along to this public forum and find out what's at risk and how you can help.

What: Public forum on proposed changes to native vegetation laws.
When: Tuesday 11 December, 7pm-8.15pm.
Where: Best Building, 26-28 St Andrews Avenue, Bendigo 3550.
For more information contact

- Victorian National Parks Association: Yasmin Kelsall or Matt Ruchel on 03 9347 5188 or email vnpa@vnpa.org.au.
- Bendigo and District Environment Council: Stuart Fraser on 03 5443 1326

November General Meeting: Speaker: Ken Walker – Native Australian Bees

Ken Walker, the senior entomologist at the Museum of Victoria is, amongst many things, the public interface of the museum's effort in helping people with insect problems of an economic, medical or nuisance nature. He gave us a run through bee taxonomy and showed us a wonderful selection of bee images from the various groups. For those of you who missed the talk, many close-up photographs of native Australian bees (there are about 2000 species) are displayed on the museum's web pages. Beginning at http://www.padil.gov.au , go to the 'Biodiversity' tab and then click on 'Australian pollinators'.
Unfortunately, I could not find the amazing film clips of bees in action at flowers (produced by Michael Batley) on this website. It was an absolute privilege to witness how bees do what they do, for example gather pollen from stamens or work a flower to get to the nectar.

Native bees are a wonderful topic and if space permits, I will re-vist them in more detail in a later edition of *Whirrakee*. This brief note is just to say how we all appreciated the wonderful talk and insights shared so freely by Ken, who travelled from Melbourne in what was most likely, a very busy week.

Similarly to the way John Lindner feels sorry for anybody who missed the November excursion (and especially the afternoon tea), I feel sorry for anybody who has missed the fantastic speaker of this November meeting.

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday December 12 6.30pm
Professor Max Finlayson, Director, Centre of Research Excellence: Institute for Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University: 'The biodiversity crisis – globally and Australia'.

For the December meeting, we usually share a meal (hence the earlier starting time). Everyone is welcome to contribute something. Please also bring your own drinks and utensils.

The first general meeting for 2013 is on
Wednesday February 13 7.30pm
There will be a surprise speaker.

Regular Fauna Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.

Family Nature Club

The next activity will involve Nature Photography at No.7 Reservoir
Sunday 17 February 2013,
This activity is part of 'Summer in the Park' program.
Please register if you are turning up with family, or let Jan and Rod know if you intend to offer assistance.
Check out their 2011 and 2012 activities at http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/
Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Positions Vacant

The BFNC is urgently looking for an enthusiastic member who can take on, or help with responsibilities of the club garden. The garden is well-established and in great shape, but especially at the moment, needs a bit of maintenance work (as all gardens in Bendigo right now) to get on top of the spring weeds. This is an ongoing position for one person, but can also be taken on by a small group.

The BFNC is also looking for a member who will take the minutes at our general meetings. This is a small but crucial job for somebody who attends regular meetings, or would like a good reason to do so.

Please phone Jan Orr with any expressions of interest for both positions.

An Exhibition of **'Botanical Illustrations'** will be held at the Bendigo Pottery.
This exhibition features some brilliant work (including work by some of our members). It opens on December 15 and is open all through January (except for Christmas Day).

Membership Renewal

If your *Whirrakee* has a red dot this month, it means that we do not have a record of your payment of your membership fee for the 2012/13 financial year. If you wish to continue to receive *Whirrakee*, please pay by December 31.
If you have already paid, please ignore this notice.